26-1111wc Neighborly Apologetics

Dr. Del Tackett's Neighborly Apologetics Webinar Series

26-1111wc - *NA- 5-Free Will & Sovereignty, Dr. Del Tackett*

Del's site: deltackett.com, Neighborly Apologetics Series Video link,

Class Resources: NA-links, Our website: wschurchofchrist.org/education.php

See a detailed summary: Detailed Summary HTML - Detailed Summary PDF

Neighborly Apologetics Transcript

26-1111-Transcript: 5-Free Will & Sovereignty (0:04 - 1:02:02)

Title: *When Sovereignty and Responsibility Meet,* **Facilitator**: Scott Reynolds

1st Half - (0:04 - 23:57) The Problem and the Views

(0:04) Thank you for taking your time, your precious time out to be here tonight. (0:09) Tonight is going to be a difficult one, but I'm looking forward to it because (0:13) we're going to spend a lot of time talking about the character nature of God. (0:17) And that's, I would rather do anything else.

(0:20) I mean, that's what I would rather do than anything else. (0:23) So I've got, we've got a number of slides here tonight. (0:27) We're going to work our way through that.

(0:30) And, uh, and then at the very end, uh, if, if we do have time, (0:39) I'd like to just kind of pull back and we'll just have a little chat together. (0:43) So, so tonight we're dealing with, uh, uh, free will and sovereignty. (0:51) Um, and the context of all of this is under the title neighborly apologetics.

(0:57) If you've been going through these with us, uh, for however long we've been doing this, (1:03) uh, you know, that this is all based upon the Jesus law. (1:06) The royal law as James calls it and James 2:8, uh, that we were to love our neighbor. (1:12) And we don't believe that that is just simply a philosophical statement.

(1:15) We believe that is actually the, the primary strategy and tactic that Jesus left for us (1:23) to do. And for the first 200 years, uh, that's how Christianity spread. (1:28) And so we believe that God has entrusted the primary work of the kingdom (1:33) to the common everyday Christian family.

And that is why we're then trying to understand (1:40) how we then present the truth of God in a neighborly apologetic way. (1:46) Um, we thank, we're thankful to the academic apologists who have done so much work, uh, (1:55) over so many, many years and generations to provide for us the academic understanding (2:02) of the truth of God as applies to these issues. What we want to do is to make sure (2:09) that we engage Mrs. Smith, not with the academics.

(2:13) When we find out she's struggling with a particular issue, but we want to do it, (2:18) uh, in a

loving way, uh, with wisdom and kindness and gentleness. (2:25) And this one today is going to be a tough one, but primarily it calls to us our priestly role as, (2:33) as, uh, the real priesthood, um, dealing with those that have been providentially placed next (2:40) to us. So we've gone through, uh, a number of these areas.

We spent a lot of time on the (2:45) resurrection number nine, and then we went back to the beginning and picked up with evil and (2:51) suffering, absolute truth, um, pluralism, which is a tough one in our culture today. (2:56) And then last time we did faith and reason. And so that leads us now, uh, to our time tonight (3:04) with the topic of free will and sovereignty.

I remember many, many years ago when I did (3:10) the survey, uh, to try and gather together and categorize all of these, uh, issues that people (3:17) deal with, not only, not only people that we know that come in contact with us, but also ourselves (3:25) and our families. And I put these in a category and little did I know at the time that I was (3:32) putting all this together, that one day was going to have to address these things. Uh, and I don't, (3:38) I don't mean anything negative about that.

I enjoy this. It's just tonight is a, is a tough (3:44) one, um, because the whole issue of free will and sovereignty then brings us into a whole lot of (3:52) areas, uh, from naturalism and fatalism, the belief of random processes to the, the sovereignty of (4:01) God and the free will of men. And those are the two primary things we're going to be looking at (4:07) tonight.

Uh, the sovereignty of God, the, the, the notion that God is sovereign over all things (4:14) and the free will of man, but it's not just these two things, uh, separately that we're going to (4:22) look at is what does this mean for finite man in the presence of an infinite God, uh, God, uh, (4:34) who says to Moses, take off your shoes. You stand on the Holy ground, the God that declares that (4:39) his name is I am. So this understanding of who God is has, um, a huge, but proper impact on, (4:51) on understanding who we are.

And that's the, the correct direction that you do these things. (4:56) You don't start with man, uh, and then try to understand God. We begin with God and the way (5:03) he's revealed himself to us in general revelation and in his word.

And then from there, we take (5:09) that truth to better understand who we are and our relationship to God. So this topic is not a simple (5:19) one. It leads us to all kinds of issues of naturalism, uh, predestination foreknowledge, (5:27) God's perfect will, permissive will, and process theology.

We'll try to deal with (5:33) most of these. Uh, I think we will probably end up skipping a few of those just because of time, (5:39) but here are some of the questions that you may find that Mrs. Smith has, as you build a relationship (5:46) with her, you begin to realize that she's struggling with this whole issue of God's sovereignty (5:51) and, and the, her free will, or does she have a free will? Uh, she may come from a particular, (5:58) um, religious tradition. Um, maybe it's, uh, it's Islam where there is a great deal of fatalism.

(6:07) Um, so these are the things that might, uh, be part of the questions that you will hear as you (6:14) begin to build these relationship with your neighbors is, does man have a free will? And (6:20) is God truly and absolutely sovereign or is he not? Or is he just partially (6:24) sovereign? And the question about God's sovereignty, man's free will, are they (6:30) contradictory? Do they, they

somehow not fit together and impossible to believe them both? (6:38) And if you believe in God's sovereignty, does that then destroy the free will of man? And then (6:43) kind of a big one, and we're not going to spend a lot of time on, we will deal with it (6:48) briefly. And that is why are so many Christians divided over these things? Because this topic (6:56) tonight will lead us to a division that is big, uh, in Christianity and in people who believe (7:06) in the scriptures, they're divided over an understanding of, of the free will of man and (7:13) the sovereignty of God. So there are five views here.

I'm going to go through these as quickly (7:20) as I can, just simply to kind of highlight what these views are. We'll begin with this first one, (7:25) because it flows from what we did last time, where we're talking about faith and reason. (7:31) And when we did that, we were talking about how naturalism, uh, has provided the foundation for (7:38) the current scientific paradigm that they're wedded to.

Naturalism believes there's nothing (7:46) that exists outside of matter and energy. And therefore man is just simply a product of the (7:53) stuff in the box. Uh, he is part of the matter and energy found within that cosmic cube.

(8:00) We looked at Dr. Will Provine. I want to revisit him for just a minute, for those of you who (8:05) weren't here last time, uh, because he says some things that we had to skip over in terms of our (8:11) topic last time, but they're relevant for what we want to deal with tonight. When you die, (8:15) you're not going to be surprised because you're going to be completely dead.

Now me, now me, (8:22) if I, if I live after I'm dead, I'm going to be really, really surprised, but at least, (8:30) at least I'm going to go to hell where I won't have all those grinning creatures from Sunday (8:36) morning with me. Let me summarize my views on what modern evolutionary biology tells us (8:48) loud and clear. And I must say that these are basically Darwin's views.

There are no gods, (8:55) no purpose and forces of any kind, no life after death. When I die, I am absolutely certain that (9:02) I'm going to be completely dead. That's just all, that's going to be the end of me.

There's no (9:08) ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning in life and no free will for humans (9:14) either. What an unintelligible idea. Christian humanism has a great deal going for it.

It's warm. (9:24) It's kindly in many ways, not maybe not to people who are a little different, but that's all right. (9:30) So this, I'm going to stop this here because we saw this list that Dr. Provine in this debate (9:38) with Dr. Philip Johnson was talking about the positions that are basically naturalism (9:45) and evolutionary biology.

If you recall, he then went on to say that he's a whole lot happier now (9:52) that he got rid of those notions of Christianity when he was growing up because you have to suspend (9:58) your actual mind and the fairy tales that he used to believe. And then here was the list, (10:03) but he put up no gods or purpose and forces, no ultimate foundation for ethics and no free will. (10:12) And that's what we want to talk about this first view from the naturalism position.

And it's a (10:22) difficult one to rationalize because most people who fit into this world have this innate belief (10:32) that they do have free will, but their logic is Dr. Provine was saying here, prevents them (10:40) from saying man has a free will because where does that come from? The naturalism would say, (10:46) there's nothing except the cosmic cube. Everything is matter and

energy. That means man (10:54) is simply a product of the random processes within the natural causes, natural cosmos, (10:59) and therefore he's merely a cause and effect machine.

So he doesn't have a free will, (11:06) he's simply a cause and effect machine. Now, I've often thought that if you were a student (11:13) with, in Dr. Provine's class that you might raise your hand and say, excuse me, Dr. Provine, (11:19) but I just have to ask this question, pun intended. And Dr. Provine might say, well, (11:26) of course you have to ask your question.

The student says, do you have to say that man has (11:32) no free will? And Dr. Provine might reply, well, of course I did because man does not have a free (11:38) will. And the student might then respond, so you're not really freely saying that. You're (11:45) saying that simply because matter and energy have determined you will say that.

And if I say that (11:50) man has a free will, then matter and energy have determined that as well. Aren't we left with just (11:56) staring at each other, waiting for the next determined response? What then is the purpose (12:01) of any conversation at all? Aren't we just spouting off our own predetermined responses? (12:06) So here is the conflict that arises with those who embrace naturalism (12:16) because they might say naturalism is true, nothing exists but matter and energy, but (12:21) one could then respond, well, then you have to say that. You're not saying that because it's true.

(12:26) You're only saying that because you have to say that. And so it's a very difficult situation for (12:31) people. And we often talk about the mind-body problem associated with naturalism, that the mind, (12:40) other than just the physical brain, the mind where we might speak of things like the heart and the (12:47) will and beneficial motives and those love and those kinds of things, where do they come from? (12:56) So that's the naturalistic approach to free will.

You will probably not run into someone (13:06) who has a very firm position that man has no free will, but you might run into someone who, (13:15) like Dr. Provine, has to argue that position because if you don't argue that position, (13:21) then you have to talk about what else is in the box or what has caused the box to come into being (13:29) and so forth. Let's look at this next one just briefly, and that's the notion of fatalism. (13:34) You'll find that in some Eastern religions and some Islamic views.

This is a belief that (13:41) one is simply caught up in a destiny that you can't escape from. It's a cause for people to (13:49) really lose much incentive at all. They just believe everything is just, you know, fatalistic.

(13:58) And the source of, from fatalism, the source of this destiny is usually attributed to (14:04) some higher power, at least this unknown thing called fate. Well, fate has just (14:12) caused everything to happen that's going to happen, and you can't change fate (14:19) it's there. So that's fatalism.

It's different from determinism. So determinism is a word that (14:26) better fits what Dr. Provine was talking about, and that is this cause and effect (14:33) that occurs in a world. There's no higher power.

There is nothing like fate that is out there (14:42) causing things to happen. Nothing out there that has predetermined things. (14:49) The determinism is just the cause and effect that determines what the next effect will be, (14:57) and that effect determines what the next cause will be, and you

have this long line of dominoes, (15:04) and they're going to fall because the domino before them hit them, and they're going to (15:09) knock over the next one, and that will knock over the next one.

So that's determinism. (15:15) So let's look now at views that acknowledge that there is a God. This third one, (15:24) kind of a little progression here as we go through this.

Process theology came about (15:31) as a result of not wanting to have a totally sovereign God and wanting to have a man that is (15:40) is more sovereign, and it's based upon, academically, it's based upon the notion that (15:47) change is the only thing that's absolutely true throughout all of the cosmos, and so therefore (15:55) God must be in change. He must be in process. That's where it comes from.

He must be a God who's (16:03) in process. Often he is described in as a grand chess master. He has no idea what moves you're (16:11) going to make.

He doesn't know what's going to happen either because everything is undetermined, (16:18) but he's a good chess player, and so he can play well, and he's a powerful chess player, (16:25) and that's normally the image that is presented by those who follow the process theology. Process (16:34) theology is a very liberal theology, and so most adherents to that are not one that adheres to (16:44) the scripture being inerrant or even possibly the reality of who Jesus is being divine and so forth, (16:53) but it's a step from the naturalism acknowledging that there is a God, but this God that exists is (17:01) just kind of a very powerful us, and so he doesn't know what's going to happen, but he can certainly (17:08) help things along. So here's just some passages I want us to look at in talking about process (17:17) theology and the sovereignty of God because the odds are now probably good that you will run into (17:25) someone who has begun to believe this way, whether they have been impacted by process theologians and (17:36) process theology thinking and writing or whether on their own mind they have just simply (17:42) reduced God and his sovereignty and raised man and have come to the position that, you know, (17:49) God is just out there doing things.

He doesn't really know the future. He can't tell the future (17:54) other than you're powerful enough to try and make it happen. So I want to run through a couple (18:00) passages here to try and help us understand what the scripture is saying about God.

Jesus Christ is (18:09) the same yesterday and today and forever. He is unchanging. Immutable is the theological (18:15) phrase there.

He does not change. Process theology rests its case upon the fact that God does change. (18:23) He is constantly changing.

Well, the scripture will say that he is the same. Every good and perfect (18:31) gift is from above, from James 1, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights who does (18:36) not change like shifting shadows. And the final, with the plans of the Lord stand firm forever the (18:44) purposes of his heart through all generations.

This is giving to us a picture of a God who (18:54) is not just simply playing this thing out with us. One of my favorite passages of all (19:01) from Isaiah 46, remember the former things those of long ago. I am God and there is no other.

I am (19:10) God and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient

times what (19:18) is still to come. I say my purpose will stand and I will do all that I please.

There certainly is (19:28) a strong position throughout the scripture that God is the one who is sovereign. (19:37) And he is certainly not just simply playing the game along with us. Well, this brings us to (19:45) the heart of the real battle here between two positions within Christianity.

(19:54) Both Arminian theology and reformed theology claim to hold a strong belief in the Bible. (20:00) It's more than they claim, they do. They hold a strong belief in the scriptures.

(20:04) They both claim Jesus is Lord and Savior. They both hold that God is sovereign. (20:10) So what's the difference? Well, the difference is how sovereign is God and how sovereign is man.

(20:19) And the primary issue here between these two doesn't deal so much with the free will of man (20:30) associated with the decisions he makes of whether or not to put on the left shoe first or the right (20:37) shoe in the morning. But it has to do with man's role in his salvation and how far does God's (20:47) sovereignty extend into that work of salvation. That's the issue here.

The Arminian position (20:56) would say that the sovereignty of God does not have absolute control over every decision, (21:01) but works within the free will of man to achieve God's plans and purposes. Man has the free will (21:08) to choose or not to choose salvation. The reformed position would say the sovereignty of God has (21:15) absolute control over every decision.

Man's will has fallen to such a degree that it requires a (21:22) work of God to bring him salvation. Man is saved by grace alone. So now I'm not going to deal (21:31) a whole lot more with that because that's not our primary purpose here.

Our purpose is to deal (21:41) with the engagement we have with Mrs. Smith and to understand as we build a deep relationship with (21:48) her, a trusted relationship with her, that she begins to express things to us. As we said about (21:55) the problem of evil, we've discovered that Mrs. Smith hates God because her husband died a horrible (22:00) death. She prayed and God didn't answer.

Her husband died and now she's bitter and angry at God. (22:06) We recognize that from a classical perspective, she's dealing with the problem of evil. (22:13) And how do we then deal with Mrs. Smith? Well, we don't deal with Mrs. Smith (22:17) to lay out to her, okay, here's the academic solution to your problem, Mrs. Smith.

No, (22:21) we weep with her. We cry with her. But we then begin to express to her some truth, (22:29) like Colossians calls us to do, to season our speech with salt so that you might know how to respond (22:35) to each individual.

And so our issue here is not that we want to do battle with our neighbor if (22:43) they hold the Arminian perspective or the reform perspective if we're the other side. That's not (22:50) our issue here. What we want to do is talk about how do we deal with some of the notion of the (22:59) free will of man and the sovereignty of God.

And it's possible, like the instance with Mrs. (23:06) Smith, she has rejected God as a result of her thought process because of things that have (23:11) happened. And quite frankly, the problem of evil is associated with this issue before us because (23:20) Mrs. Smith might say, if God were truly sovereign, he couldn't have kept my husband from dying a (23:26) horrible death. Okay, so our approach here, first of all, and the first thing we have to always do, (23:33) that's the thing we need

to remind ourselves constantly.

Whenever we come to any of these (23:39) issues, we have to go back and gaze upon the face of God. We have to look at who he is. (23:47) We have to look at how he has revealed himself to us in the general revelation and the special (23:53) revelation is word is revealing to us who God is. (23:57)

2nd Half (23:57 - 1:02:02) Sovereignty, the Tension, and the Heart

(23:57) And so we're going to take some time. We're (24:00) going to go through some scripture here tonight. You know, the word of God just wash over you if (24:09) you want, but we're going to look at this notion that God is sovereign.

And what does that mean? (24:17) Because the debate really, all these issues are over this notion of God and his sovereignty. (24:25) Naturalists would declare there is no God. But from then on, the question is how sovereign is God? (24:31) You know, what boundary must we put on God when we talk about his sovereignty? Okay, so let's just (24:40) look at some passages together.

You can just sit back. There are about a dozen of these. I'm just (24:45) going to read them through to you because it's important for us to hear the word of God to make (24:52) sure we are understanding correctly who God is, and especially in this area from Ephesians.

(25:00) In him, we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to the purpose of him (25:08) who works all things according to the counsel of his will. (25:16) From Matthew 10, are not two sparrows sold for a penny, and not one of them will fall to the ground (25:23) apart from your father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

1 Chronicles, (25:32) yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor (25:39) for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom. You are exalted (25:48) as head over all.

From Nehemiah, you are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, (25:56) the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that (26:02) is in them, and you preserve all of them, and the host of heaven worships you. Psalm 83, (26:12) so that they will know that you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the most high over all the earth.

(26:23) For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, (26:30) whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through (26:36) him and for him, and he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (26:46) I form light and I create darkness. I make well-being and create calamity.

I am the Lord (26:54) who does all these things. Shower, O heavens, from above and let the clouds rain down their (27:01) righteousness. Let the earth open that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit.

Let the earth (27:06) cause them both to sprout. I, the Lord, have created it. Woe to him who strives with him who (27:14) formed him, a pot among earthen pots.

Does the clay say to him who forms it, (27:21) what are you making, or your work has no handles? From Proverbs 16, the lot is cast into the lap, (27:31) but its every decision is from the Lord. Acts 13, and when the Gentiles heard this, (27:39) they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to (27:45) eternal life believed. Ephesians, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, (27:53) that we should be holy and blameless before him, in love he predestined us for adoption to himself (28:00) as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious (28:08) grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

Psalm 115, our God is in the heavens. (28:16) He does all that he pleases. Ah, Lord, it is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your (28:25) great power and by your outstretched arm.

Nothing is too hard for you. Many are the plans in the (28:34) mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand. R.C. Sproul made this very (28:44) interesting statement.

Many Christians salute the sovereignty of God but believe in the sovereignty (28:50) of man. He said to say that God's sovereignty is limited by man's freedom is to make man sovereign. (28:58) So when we think about this issue before us, consider what's happening here.

The issue (29:09) here is how much sovereignty are we going to acknowledge God has versus how much sovereignty (29:22) we want man to have. And as R.C. said, you know, to say that God's sovereignty is limited by man's (29:34) freedom is to make man sovereign. Indirectly related to each other.

If you reduce the sovereignty (29:46) of God, then you're raising the sovereignty of man. If you try to raise the sovereignty of man, (29:51) you must therefore reduce the sovereignty of God. This is an interesting statement from Spurgeon.

(29:58) No doctrine in the whole word of God, no doctrine in the whole word of God has more excited the (30:04) hatred of mankind than the truth of the absolute sovereignty of God. Why does this provoke the (30:15) hatred of mankind? I think Spurgeon is correct. I've seen it.

I've seen it over and over and over (30:25) again. And the reason is because if you try to increase the sovereignty of God, then you must (30:33) reduce the sovereignty of man. And when you reduce the sovereignty of man, you're reducing his (30:39) seemingly his significance.

And we hate the loss of significance. We want to have more significance. (30:50) And so my position and my caution to you, to all of us, is that when we come to this issue, (31:00) we want to be careful that the reason we're not forming our opinion here is because (31:07) we want to be more significant.

We want man to be more significant. We want to give him more (31:12) significance. Now, if that happens as a result of a study of the word of God, then that's fine.

(31:19) But if we're motivated by that, because we want man to have more significance and therefore we (31:24) reduce the sovereignty of God, that's probably not the right way to approach this. Jonathan (31:30) Edwards, absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. I agree with that.

(31:36) God's sovereignty has ever appeared to me a great part of his glory. It has often been my delight to (31:43) approach God and adore him as a sovereign God. Now, I know people who would loathe this statement (31:53) by Jonathan Edwards, because to them, the notion of God's sovereignty is not a comfort to them.

(32:04) In fact, I know many who despise the notion of the sovereignty of God, and I think it's because (32:10) of what we just talked about. So, R.C. Sproul goes to the point of talking about God's sovereignty, (32:17) saying there's not one piece of cosmic dust that is outside the scope of God's sovereign (32:24) providence. That God is, as the scripture says, in him we live and move and have our being.

(32:32) That every particle in the entire creation is under the control and sovereign hand. (32:43) A.W. Pink, one of my favorite authors, he was not famous during his lifetime, but later on. (32:53) No revolving world, no shining of a star, no storm, no creature moves, no actions of men, (33:00) no errands of angels, no deeds of devil.

Nothing in all the vast universe can come to pass (33:07) otherwise than God has eternally proposed. Here is a foundation of faith. Here is a resting place (33:14) for the intellect.

Here is an anchor for the soul, both sure and steadfast. It is not blind fate, (33:22) unbridled evil, man or devil, but the Lord Almighty who is ruling the world, ruling it (33:28) according to his own good pleasure and for his own eternal glory. I do know people who do not (33:35) understand why the sovereignty of God would bring peace or a resting place for the soul.

(33:46) And I think personally, just because of the people I know, their struggle is in the loss (33:53) of significance of man. Salvation is the work of God. He is alone who quickens the soul dead (34:01) in trespasses and sins, and it is he also who maintains the soul in its spiritual life.

This, (34:07) of course, is the issue that we looked at between an Arminian position and a reformed position to (34:16) try to simplify it. So here's a good question. Does man appear to have a free will? (34:22) And those of the scripture lead us to believe man does have a free will.

(34:29) This is Jesus, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How (34:36) often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, (34:43) and you were not willing? It's a very interesting passage. Jesus says he longed to do something, (34:52) but people were not willing.

They built the high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom (34:59) to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, (35:06) nor did it enter into my mind that they should do this abomination to cause Judah (35:13) to sin. There's another very, very interesting passage associated with God saying, look, (35:20) it didn't even enter my mind that you would stoop to this. So what does this mean? Free will means (35:33) that God has given man the ability to make choices.

However, his choices are limited. (35:40) He cannot choose to fly like an eagle nor swim like a shark breathing through gills. He has free (35:44) will to choose, but only within the bounds of his nature.

He can't go beyond his nature. (35:52) If God is sovereign, is it therefore impossible for man to have a free will? If man operates with (36:00) a free will, is it therefore impossible for God to be truly sovereign? Are these things contradictory? (36:10) So that is what is before us, because this is important as we begin to deal (36:16) with someone who's wrestling with this, maybe yourself, maybe your children, (36:22) to talk about this whole notion. Are these truly contradictory? Because (36:27) as you see at the bottom of the comments, throw one out or you (36:33) could bring some balance to this so that you can believe them.

(36:43) Contradictory propositions cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time. This is the law (36:48) of non-contradiction. So does that therefore mean free will and sovereignty, God can't both (36:54) be true? So I've often used this illustration that a jigsaw puzzle can lead you to find two (37:05) pieces that you are convinced are not both part of this puzzle.

They just look too different. (37:14) And yet, if you were to finally get the puzzle together, you might

find (37:19) that in fact they do have an important part of the overall picture. You may not have the (37:26) intervening pieces yet.

Now, if you have two pieces and they both, according to the law of (37:34) non-contradiction, if they both are the bottom left corner, then you have a problem. Okay, that's (37:41) true contradiction. So the question before us is, does this notion of man's free will and God's (37:53) total sovereignty present to us a contradiction? A contradiction in which we have to do something.

(38:01) We have to throw one out or we have to reduce God's sovereignty or we have to increase man's (38:07) sovereignty, which is what happened. Okay, well let's look at this. Very interesting.

Does God (38:16) present both of these as true? Let's look at a couple passages. The first one from Acts. Does (38:24) God's word tell us about his sovereignty and man's free will? And here we have in the same passage (38:30) both of these.

Men of Israel, listen to these words. (38:35) Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God (38:42) performed through him in your midst, just as you yourself know, this man delivered over by the (38:51) predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men (39:00) and put him to death. This man, Jesus, delivered by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of (39:08) God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death.

So here we see in this (39:15) same passage both the fact that God has predetermined all of this and yet man has (39:23) been held accountable for their actions. And one would presume they're held accountable because (39:30) they chose to do so. Look at this other passage from Philippians 2. Work out your own salvation (39:38) with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work (39:47) for his good pleasure.

So here we have in this passage man is to work out something yet God is (39:54) the one who's working it out in them. What do we conclude from this? And I realize, you know, (40:02) we're going through this rather quickly. You can spend your lifetime looking at all of this (40:08) and I recognize we are skimming along the surface of this.

And it's possible some of you are (40:18) upset because we're not driving a lot of these things to the ground. We just can't do that. (40:24) So what do we conclude from this? And I'll give you my conclusion.

God is sovereign (40:32) and he is totally sovereign. The passage of the talk about God's sovereignty cannot be (40:38) minimized. They can't be reduced.

He has predetermined plans and purposes and he's (40:45) going to carry those out. The passage in Romans 9 is difficult for some people. We have to deal (40:52) with the reality of what it says where he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy (40:58) and I will compassion on whom I have compassion.

So then it depends not on human will or exertion (41:09) but on God who has mercy. Okay, there we have one of the clear declarations that God is sovereign (41:17) and he has his predetermined plans and he's going to carry out those predetermined plans. (41:22) And yet we have at the same time that man is accountable for his actions.

When he sets his (41:29) will to do something, he is held accountable for that if that is contrary to God's righteousness. (41:39) So we say is this a contradiction or is this a mystery? Now to some extent if you're putting a (41:49) a you know a jigsaw puzzle together sometimes I have done this and I've said okay this is a (41:55) mystery. I don't know how I don't know how this is going to go together but it does.

(42:03) And I am convinced that God's word is absolutely true and the truth about his sovereignty (42:15) is not to be diminished. And yet we have the reality that man is held accountable for his (42:23) actions. And so we'll conclude with that we'll partially conclude are there things about God (42:30) that are so deep and so far beyond our finite ability to understand that we sometimes come to (42:39) a place where we are left with a divine mystery.

Where wisdom calls us to rest in the wonder of (42:49) what we have been allowed to see. There's nothing wrong with accepting the truth of God and yet not (42:59) knowing how they fit together. Because logically if from a pure logical position these do not (43:07) contradict themselves.

They don't hold the same place same time and all that. (43:11) They appear to be contradictory. They're both true because the word of God says they are.

(43:18) C.S. Lewis had a great illustration I want to pass this on to you. We did this in the engagement (43:23) project and this has to do with this sovereign will of God and the sovereign knowledge of God (43:36) um before the mountains were born and you brought forth the earth and the world from everlasting to (43:42) everlasting your God he is eternal from everlasting to everlasting. I Jesus says I am the alpha and the (43:50) omega.

He doesn't say I was the beginning and I will be the end because he is not caught up (43:57) in time and space like we are. He is the beginning. He is the beginning and he is the end.

I am the (44:05) alpha and the omega the beginning and the end. So C.S. Lewis and and of course every (44:12) every earthly finite illustration we try to make will always fall short at some point. (44:19) But I found this illustration by C.S. Lewis to be particularly good.

He said if you could (44:27) stretch a piece of paper and stretch it from all eternity past to all eternity future (44:36) and not just one strip it goes all all directions it's a it's a piece of paper that goes in (44:41) in all infinite infinitely in all directions an infinite piece of paper and then you were to (44:50) draw a small dash on that infinite piece of paper that small dash would represent all of time. (45:00) It would represent the beginning and the end as it applies to those of us who are caught up (45:06) in the notion of time those who of us who are caught up in a world of cause and effect. We don't (45:13) know anything outside of cause and effect.

You know we don't know anything else but change. (45:19) But you we can't then extrapolate that upon God. And one of the one of the easiest things to do (45:29) and one of the most difficult things not to do is to somehow trap God into our time (45:40) constraints.

That God exists all around. If you look at this dash I think it's a good it's a good (45:47) image for us to consider that if you look at this dash God he is the beginning he is the end. (45:55) He sees everything it all exists within his omnipresence.

He is present still at the (46:02) beginning. He's present at the end. We talked about this in engagement project (46:09) about the eternality of the sacrifice of Christ.

(46:14) When he cried my God my God why have you forsaken me that that was an eternal cry. (46:20) Because of who God is. He God isn't caught up in time like he's not we're not processed (46:26) theologians here we're not caught up in that kind of thinking.

God exists outside of all of that. He (46:32) is on the present. And so that cry is ever present before him that's the eternal sacrifice that was (46:41) made on our behalf.

And that is why our eternal separation from God was paid for by Jesus there (46:49) on the cross. So a few final thoughts here on free will. I love this.

I love this picture. (46:58) What a great picture in talking about free will. And so the first thing I wanted to say is is this (47:10) personally I don't understand why there is such a battle to maintain (47:18) one's free will.

Because I will be honest with you. One of my not one of the most constant prayer (47:30) that I have before the Lord is to ask God to take away my free will. I don't want my free will.

I (47:40) hate my free will. I don't want it. I want his will.

You know my prayer is like like a SIM card (47:47) you know pull out my free will and insert your will. That's what I want. That's what I want.

(47:52) And I think every true believer in Christ has that same longing. And there will be a day I (47:58) am absolutely convinced that in our glorified state we will then have his will. We won't (48:08) long to have our own will.

I don't long to have my own will. I don't understand why people fight (48:16) for their own free will. Because I don't want.

I hate mine. I don't want it. But let's talk about (48:24) the will and the heart for a minute.

And I'm going to I'm going to summarize. I have a couple (48:30) slides here and then I'm going to close this down stop the share and then we're just going to talk (48:35) for a minute in the time that we have left. Jesus said out of the heart come evil thoughts (48:44) and actions.

Murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. All of these come (48:55) out of the heart. You may find it interesting that if you just did a word study you'll find (49:03) that the word will is very subordinate in terms of numbers to the heart in the scriptures.

You'll (49:13) find God talk about the heart a whole lot more than he will the will. And the vast majority of (49:17) the time he talks about the will it's not your will. It's not my will.

It's talking about God's (49:20) will. And so what I wanted to talk about for a second is we've talked about free will because (49:30) that's the phrase that is used that's one you'll hear people make the argument over and over again (49:38) using the phrase of free will. I think that's the wrong thing to be talking about.

(49:48) Is it the will that drives the heart or is it the heart that drives the will? Because I believe it's (49:56) heart that drives the will. What Jesus is talking about here it's out of the heart. You set your will (50:03) to murder someone.

You set your will towards lying. You set your will to do these things. Why? Because (50:11) of the heart.

Because of the heart. And so I ask the question, okay is it the will that drives the (50:18) heart or is it the heart that drives the will? I think if you look at the scripture I think you (50:22) will find it's the heart that drives the will. And so if the heart drives the will then the will isn't (50:30) free.

Your will just can't do stuff because it's driven by your heart. Your heart will drive (50:44) the will that sets us up to do something. Okay so we're going to come back to that here.

Let's (50:55) some books if you're interested. And of course you get a copy of all these. (51:01) A.W. Pink I already mentioned to you that in fact I even have it with me.

His book (51:07) The Sovereignty of God has been a delight to me for many many many years. I don't even remember (51:15) when I first got that but it was it was at least 50 years ago. Packer's book Evangelism (51:24) The Sovereignty of God I think is must reading.

Charnock and his Attributes of God I think is a (51:31) book that has to be on your shelf. And then there's such a delightful book by Joni Eareckson Tada (51:40) entitled A Place of Healing: Wrestling with the Mysteries of Suffering, Pain, and God's Sovereignty. (51:50) I remember I had a chance to spend some time with John and I asked her you know this question (52:00) and it had to had to do you know with what was God thinking before her actions.

Some of you may (52:07) know she had this diving accident and broke her neck and then totally paralyzed for the rest of (52:16) her life. We would say a tragic accident she would not. And she said well I think God was (52:25) looking I mean see here's here's my daughter Johnny and she is headed in the wrong direction.

(52:33) And with my loving hand I'm going to I'm going to guide her in a new path. (52:40) So it's a it's a very interesting thing not everybody will understand these kinds of things. (52:48) But I would recommend if you're struggling with this read read her book.

Okay so next we're going (52:55) to deal with God's existence and his nature and that that will deal with the kinds of aspects of (53:02) God's nature that are troublesome to people that people find troubling. Mrs. Smith might find (53:08) troubling or Mrs. Smith may say I don't believe that God exists anymore. So that's what we'll be (53:14) dealing with next time.

All right so I'm going to stop share here so that we can just talk for a (53:22) second about the heart and the mind and and how it deals with our topic tonight. We spent some time (53:35) in the engagement project and and I recommend if you have an opportunity to (53:43) to go through that to to do it. But we've spent some time in in the engagement project talking (53:49) about the heart and looking at the scriptures and their and how the scripture defines also how it (53:59) it defines the mind and the conclusion that I've come to (54:06) and we lay out there in the engagement project is that the mind (54:12) is the core of the heart and the mind is the sum total of all the things that (54:20) we believe to be really real and we act out what we believe is really real.

And so (54:29) the mind and the heart together then cause our will to be set on things. We act. Why? Because we (54:42) believe something and and we don't act on something because we believe something.

(54:51) And so it's the heart and the mind that are really the issue here and the scripture is very clear (55:00) about the heart. Desperately wicked, deceitful, beyond measure, and you know from my perspective (55:12) talking about myself that it is the heart and was my heart that had no desire for God (55:22) or if not for the sovereign purpose and plan of God and grace of God that he impregnated my heart (55:33) with certain truth claims that caused me then to turn to him and God is the one who had to do that (55:41) work within me. So I offer this to you because I think it may be profitable for us not to get (55:49) caught up in the word will but to talk to Mrs. Smith about the heart.

Not to get caught up in (55:57) some philosophical thing about you know man's free will but let's talk about the heart of man. You (56:06) what drives you to do something? It's not just some piece we call the will that's kind of out (56:15) of control. I mean just you know that it's there and it can go left, right, up, down.

It goes left, (56:22) right. It goes up or it goes down. Why? Because the heart and the mind and there's logic there.

(56:31) There's all kinds of things involved. It's not simple. We're a complex creature (56:38) but the heart itself is what drives what we do.

We act based upon what we believe is really real (56:45) and that is the no pun that's the heart of the matter here and so in our own life, in our (56:55) children's life, in Mrs. Smith's life what we're dealing with is a heart issue. We're not dealing (57:01) with a will issue. We're dealing with a heart issue.

The will is set upon what the heart wants (57:07) to do. Then I have to look at my life. You know the things that I want to do.

Why do I set my (57:14) will to do something? Because I want to do it. Because I believe something is true. You know (57:22) sometimes people begin to believe that true significance is found in having a whole lot more (57:31) followers than somebody else or true significance is found in having people tell you that you're (57:40) pretty, tell you that you're funny.

True significance is found in having power. True significance is (57:49) found in driving the best car. Why do we do that? Why do we set our will and getting that car? Why (57:56) do we set our will on making a new video? Why do we set our will and taking 200 selfies to get the (58:03) right selfie? Why? Because our heart believes that my significance is bound up in getting people (58:13) to make me feel significant and I therefore set my will to do those things.

So the heart is at the (58:23) core of all of this. I say this so that we don't get caught up in some kind of you know will that's (58:33) just out there somewhere. They wouldn't really know what it is but we're more cognizant of the (58:40) heart and what it is we believe and the truth claims that we find ourselves believing.

Those (58:47) truth claims come to us through videos, movies, music. They come through our own desires. Our own (58:55) desires to be significant and so forth.

Okay so Mark let me turn this over to you. I think it's (59:01) the top of the hour and I've gone too long here but turn it over to you. (59:09) Awesome.

Thank you Dr. Tackett. Lots to think about for sure. I want to remind everybody that (59:15) we're sending out the link to the recording of tonight's presentation as well as Dr. Tackett's (59:22) slides as soon as we get that recording uploaded which probably sometime tomorrow morning or late (59:28) morning.

So you're also welcome to reply to the email that you'll receive and then you'll see (59:35) also a link to the previous recording's previous best live stream messages in this series. So (59:42) we're really thankful that you're here tonight. Appreciate you taking time out of your busy (59:46) schedule and I think Dr. Tackett we are at the top of the hour so how about just in (59:53) everyone's schedule we close in prayer and send everybody off.

Okay let's do that and again thank (1:00:00) you all for your time for being here tonight and slogging your way through some difficult material (1:00:07) but I hope and pray that the Lord will use it in some way that the scripture and the word that we (1:00:13) read will be of benefit to you. Father thank you for your goodness and kindness to us. Thank you (1:00:19) father for revealing yourself to us not only in the creation around us but you have specifically (1:00:25) revealed who you are in your word.

It is awesome and sometimes father it is difficult for us to (1:00:31) plumb those depths and we're not surprised by that for father you are infinite. You are everlasting (1:00:38) to everlasting. You are the alpha and the omega and Lord we should not be surprised that we cannot (1:00:45) fully understand the depth of who you are but we can understand what you told us (1:00:50) and we pray father you would help us in that truth to be able to rest in the reality that you are (1:00:58) in control.

You are not out of control. You are not lost. You're not processing things along with (1:01:06) us but that you father in the end and your purposes and plans will bring all things to a just (1:01:13) and good and beautiful end.

We thank you for allowing us to meet with these people. People (1:01:20) from various places maybe all over the world. We pray you would bless them.

Father you would (1:01:26) wash them with your word and nourish them through your word that Lord we might be (1:01:33) people who fulfill our role as a royal priesthood in engaging those that you providentially placed (1:01:40) around us to build those deep relationships so that we might have an opportunity to speak that (1:01:45) which is true into the heart and mind of someone who is desperately needing to hear of you. May it (1:01:52) all be for your glory in Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. Hey thanks again everyone for being with us (1:01:58) and we'll say good night to you. Good night.

Good night. (1:02:02)